

U.S. Reps. **John Campbell, R-Calif.**, and Peter DeFazio, D-Ore., earned praise from The Humane Society of the United States for introducing H.R. 4214, the Compound 1080 and Sodium Cyanide Elimination Act, legislation to curtail the use of two highly toxic predator poisons by U.S. Department of Agriculture's Wildlife Services.

The legislation will ban Sodium fluoroacetate, commonly known as Compound 1080, and the use of sodium cyanide for lethal predator control. These dangerous toxins – which are used by the agency to kill coyotes and other wildlife as a government subsidy for private ranchers—pose a national security risk, and are harmful to federally protected wildlife and family pets. Humans have also been severely injured by accidentally triggering the poison mechanisms.

“Data reported by the USDA shows that less than 1 percent of livestock are killed by predators, yet the federal government hands over millions in taxpayer-subsidized wildlife extermination services to private agribusiness every year,” said Rep. Campbell.

“Through the use of very dangerous toxins like Compound 1080 and sodium cyanide, this extermination service oftentimes kills indiscriminately and results in the targeting of non-predatory wildlife and household pets. With more humane and effective predator control methods already in use, banning these poisons is a reasonable measure that protects both animals and the taxpayer.”

“Compound 1080 and M-44 sodium cyanide capsules are lethal, dangerous and unnecessary poisons,” said Rep. DeFazio. “They pose a very serious threat to our nation’s citizens, wildlife and domesticated animals. I am pleased to support this legislation, which would halt the use of these needlessly dangerous poisons permanently.”

“Tax payers shouldn’t have to foot the bill for these inhumane and indiscriminate poisons, which are like landmines for wildlife and family pets,” said Michael Markarian, chief program and policy officer for The HSUS. “We are grateful to Representatives Campbell and DeFazio for introducing this common-sense bill to protect wildlife, companion animals, and public safety.”

A variety of effective non-lethal predator control methods are readily available, such as fencing, guard animals, electronic sound and light devices, night penning, and carcass removal. Of the 112,781 predators killed by Wildlife Services in FY 2010, only 12.6 percent were killed with predator toxicants, indicating that the agency does not even need these poisons for its lethal control efforts.

Facts on Compound 1080:

Wildlife Services employees load Compound 1080 pouches into collars worn by sheep. When a predator (coyotes are the primary targets) attacks a sheep—usually around the neck—its teeth may puncture the pouch, releasing a lethal dose of the poison into the coyote's mouth.

Death is inevitable, but it is a drawn out process. The coyote suffers convulsions and muscle spasms for hours before dying. This suffering is so unacceptably intense that Compound 1080 should be prohibited.

In addition, although Compound 1080 is only supposed to kill the attacking coyote, the poison leaking from the collar onto the dead sheep renders the carcass poisonous to scavengers, extending the chain of suffering and death to even family pets.

Facts on M-44:

An M-44 is a spring-loaded bait tamped into the ground that, when triggered by an animal investigating the bait, shoots a lethal dose of cyanide into the animal's mouth.

Wildlife Services staff have placed thousands of M-44s on public and private lands throughout the country. The bait attracts a wide range of animals, claiming victims that include the highly endangered California condor, federally protected gray wolves and even pet dogs.

M-44s have also severely injured unsuspecting members of the public who run across them on public lands and inadvertently trigger the poison mechanism.

The increasing availability of proven, effective, and long-term non-lethal techniques for protecting livestock from predators renders the use of these archaic, indiscriminate, and cruel poisons completely indefensible.

Instances of Family Pets Killed by M-44:

February 2011 (Texas): The Walker family's dog Bella was poisoned by an M-44 sodium cyanide device placed by WS just 918 feet from their house and without notification of the family. Despite being notified of Bella's death, WS reset the device twice within the following two weeks.

April 2010 (West Virginia): Charm, James and Carol Gardner's 11-year-old Siberian husky, was killed by an M-44 device after a neighboring farmer failed to inform the Gardners that the devices had been set on his land. WS claimed it was not responsible because the agency had asked the cooperator to sign a document stating that he would contact his neighbors about the M-44s. However, WS stated that it could "not confirm if this was accomplished as USDA APHIS does not have the authority to require our cooperators to conduct this notification." Further, the WS agent buried Charm without notifying the Gardners of her death despite the fact that she was wearing county dog tags and a rabies tag. WS also stated in a letter to the Gardners that the agency had prior knowledge that domestic dogs frequented the cooperator's property, but set the M-44s regardless.

April 2006 (Utah): Max, Sharyn and Tony Aguiar's 2-year-old German shepherd was killed when he triggered an M-44 at a rock quarry on public land. The agency denied any wrong doing, and in a memo the WS state director for Utah stated, "I have concerns about the government settling cases with dog owners because it is all too easy for someone to intentionally take a dog into an area posted with sign with the intention of getting the dog killed. I recommend against settling this claim."

February 2006 (Utah): Samuel Pollock, a biologist for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, was hunting on federal land with Jenna, his 2-year-old Labrador retriever, when she triggered an M-44 that had been illegally placed by WS. The EPA's investigation of the case concluded that two use restrictions had been violated and led to the issuance of a Notice of Warning to WS.

February 2002 (Oregon): Oberon, Danielle Clair's dog, suffered for more than eight hours before dying from exposure to sodium cyanide from an M-44 he triggered on property next door to her home and placed without her knowledge. In response to the Oregon Dept. of Agriculture's investigation into the incident, WS requested that ODA "consider the info provided during the investigation be confidential and not disclosed as public record [emphasis added]."